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RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 0002
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RUEHMY/AMEMBASSY MONROVIA 0002
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 0886
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0005
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1068
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0255
RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000352

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [KPKO](#) [MCAP](#) [PREL](#) [FJ](#)

SUBJECT: FIJI AND PKO PARTICIPATION: CURRENT PROSPECTS FOR
IRAQ, LEBANON, EAST TIMOR, AND ELSEWHERE

REF: SUVA 340

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D)

Summary

1. (C) Fiji's Home Affairs Minister and CEO informed us that Fiji's Cabinet has approved deployment of 34 more troops to UNAMI in Iraq and 2 officers to East Timor. A request for Fiji to join the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq is before Cabinet, but no decision appears imminent. The Minister said the UN has not asked Fiji to contribute to the expanded UNIFIL in Lebanon, though we are told the UN Peacekeeping Commission did initiate an informal query via the Fiji MFA about capacity some while ago. When the Minister asked about assistance for a Lebanon mission, we noted it is a UN operation. We accented active USG FMF and IMET support to build Fiji's PKO capacities and a U.S. willingness to consider assistance for an Iraq Coalition deployment. In discussion of a Cabinet review of PKO issues, we urged confirmation, even expansion, of Fiji's efforts. The Minister and military commander plan to travel to Iraq, the Sinai, Rome, Sudan, and Liberia soon. The Baghdad stop could be an opportunity to discuss the Coalition option. End Summary.

Ministerial oversight trip re PKO for Cabinet review

2. (C) In a conversation on August 30, Fiji Minister for Home Affairs Vosanibola described to the Ambassador and DATT the state of play regarding the Fiji Cabinet's ongoing assessment of peacekeeping prospects. As part of that assessment, the Minister, Home Affairs CEO Korovavala, and Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) Commander Bainimarama are planning a trip to Baghdad, the Sinai, Rome (MFO HQ), the Sudan, and Liberia in the coming weeks (The RFMF says the dates are Oct. 10 - Nov. 7). RFMF troops are with UNAMI in Iraq, the MFO in the Sinai, and with UN forces in Sudan and Bosnia. A few Fiji Police are deployed in Liberia. (Note: We pleaded for early notice of details for the Iraq portion of the trip to facilitate travel there. We hear the Iraq dates are Nov. 2-4.)

More troops to UNAMI

¶3. (C) On Iraq, Vosanibola said a Cabinet meeting on August 29 approved the immediate one-year deployment of another 34 RFMF troops to UNAMI, to be located at "Bechtel" in/near Baghdad. These troops supplement the 189 already on the ground protecting UN forces in Baghdad (134) and Erbil (55), and they are taken from a contingent that had been preparing for a UN deployment to Basra that seems stalled.

No word re Coalition of the Willing

¶4. (C) We asked the status of the U.S. and RFMF request for Fiji to join the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq. Vosanibola said the issue is before the Cabinet, but no decision has been made. We reiterated the USG's strong interest in Fiji joining the Coalition.

Two officers to East Timor

¶5. (U). Vosanibola confirmed a press report that Cabinet has decided to respond to a UN request to send an RFMF Colonel and a Major to East Timor.

Lebanon? No formal UN request yet

¶6. (C) A senior MFA official recently indicated publicly that Fiji has been approached by the UN to consider renewing its participation in UNIFIL in Lebanon. Fiji had troops there for over 20 years before UNIFIL's scale-down. When we asked the status of such a request, Vosanibola replied that, actually, the UN has not yet asked. (Note: We heard a few weeks ago from MFA that the new UN Peacekeeping Commission inquired about what Fiji might be able to contribute in

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Lebanon, but apparently no formal request has followed.) The RFMF has been calculating what assets it might be able to contribute to UNIFIL, but lack of clarity about what external assistance would be available to support a Fiji deployment -- including armored vehicles, transport, etc. -- and uncertainty about new UNIFIL rules of engagement have hindered planning.

U.S. assistance?

¶7. (C) Vosanibola asked if the U.S. would be able to assist a Fiji deployment to Lebanon. We responded that we have received no guidance. We did suggest that, since the Lebanon operation is under the UN, it is likely any discussion of assistance would be in UN channels. We noted that the U.S. would be able to discuss assistance directly for a deployment to the Coalition in Iraq. We affirmed the U.S. view that Fiji's PKO efforts are commendable, contributing to global peace and security, and we reminded that we have backed that view with FMF and IMET assistance to build the RFMF's capacity to have a well-trained and appropriately equipped PKO force. We suggested that a Fiji Cabinet endorsement, even expansion, of that PKO role would be very much appreciated.

Maintaining a 600-person limit

¶8. (C) Asked the prospects for Cabinet's review of PKO, Vosanibola described a degree of concern that troop contributions crimp Fiji's budget. When we suggested that actually PKO remittances contribute to Fiji's economic prosperity, Vosanibola acknowledged the point and said remittances are important. Still, he said a long-standing, Cabinet-imposed maximum of 600 Republic of Fiji peacekeepers deployed abroad remains in place, and Home Affairs does not advocate revisiting it. CEO Korovavala said, after the latest Cabinet decisions, Fiji's PKO total will be 578. We observe that, if the 600 limit stays in place, any new deployment to Lebanon and/or the Coalition would either have to be small or would have to draw from current deployments.

Comment

19. (C) The Home Affairs Ministry gave the impression it does not expect the Fiji Cabinet review of PKO to rock the boat very much. On the other hand, we know the RFMF aspires for some new thinking, in particular about having Fiji troops join the Coalition in Iraq. The Vosanibola visit to Baghdad to observe UNAMI can be an opportunity to push for Coalition participation, as Gen. Abizaid did here last February. We noted a seeming calm in relations between the Government and RFMF Commander Bainimarama. Vosanibola indicated the situation is OK for now. They are talking. The long PKO-oriented trip would seem a real test of just how compatible the two men have become.

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